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Multiliteracies and a Metalanguage for the Moving Image: Multimodal Analysis of a Claymation Movie

More than a decade ago, a group of ten educators who met together in New London advocated a new approach to literacy pedagogy in response to the multiplicity of communications channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity (New London Group, 1996). It proposed a pedagogy and metalanguage of multiliteracies to broaden exclusively print-based and monocultural approaches to teaching language and literacy (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

The significance of this paper is the extension of the multiliteracies metalanguage to the kineikonic mode; that is, the mode of moving images (Burn & Parker, 2003). I demonstrate the application of a new metalanguage through a multimodal analysis of a claymation movie designed at school by four year six girls. The textual data are drawn from my critical ethnographic research, which I have detailed elsewhere (See: Author, 2005a; 2005b; 2006a; 2006b; 2006c; 2006d; 2007a; 2007b).

The term “multimodal” describes the complexity and interrelationship of more than one mode of meaning, combining linguistic, visual, auditory, gestural, or spatial modes. Multimodal design differs from independent modes because it interconnects the modes in dynamic relationships and involves the whole body in making meaning (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress, 2000a, 2000b; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 2000). The concept of multimodality is currently important to educators in Australian schools for political reasons. For example, syllabi across the seven states and territories in Australia address the need for students to design multimodal texts for a variety of social purposes (ACT Department of Education and Training, 2000; Board of Studies New South Wales, 2007; Department of Education and Training Tasmania, 2007; Department of Education and Training Western Australia, 2005; Department of Employment Education and Training Northern Territory, 2005; South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services, 2004; Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, 2005).

While specialist terms for multimodal film and media analysis are not new, their simplification and adaptation to kineikonic design in schools is novel. A simplified language is needed so that the essential elements can be taught explicitly to students. I have compiled a taxonomy of design elements in the kineikonic mode derived through the analysis of kineikonic designs and the simplification of specialist terms (See Table 1.0). This metalanguage of description is designed for use by teachers in schools when working in the kineikonic mode.

Prefilmic Conventions	Examples
Message	Determining audience, purpose or message
Movie Genre	Narrative film: Introduce setting/characters, events, complications, climax, resolution, coda
Storyboard	Visual sequence of events, number of scenes and frames, anticipated framing and camera angles, dialogue to match frames

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Setting and props	Backgrounds, foregrounds, 2-D and 3-D forms, colour, texture, material, weight, size, stability, shape, contrast, symmetry, asymmetry, colour
Characters	Represent race, gender, age, role, identity, and power through skin colour, hair, facial features, physique, costume, accessories
Filmic Conventions	Examples
Filming Location	Private or public spaces, indoor or outdoor
Lighting	Constant/varied, bright/ dull, dark/ light, soft/harsh, shadows
Zoom	Long, medium, or close-up shots to show social distance between viewer and characters
Point of view	Aerial, high, low, eye-level camera angles, such as to show the subjects' degree of power
Framing	What is included or excluded in the shot, boundaries or empty spaces
Pointers	Using objects, gaze or limbs of characters to lead the viewer's eye to important things
Movement	
(a) Characters	Movement, gestures, posture, facial expressions, lip synchronising, gaze (characters look directly or not directly at camera or between characters to show degrees of engagement)
(b) Objects	Background movements simply to create life and rhythm
(c) Techniques	e.g. stop motion animation (repositioning objects or characters to create movement while maintaining a static background and props), background animations, absence of movement
Screen Layout	Positioning of characters/objects (eg, left [given], right [new], top [ideal], bottom [real], foreground [important], background [less important], centre [important] versus margins [less important])
Character Relations	Characters facing the side, front, or back to show level of engagement between characters
Power Relations	Panning up objects to signify power of subject, top-down

Time	to diminish power, shadows, darkening or lightening scene, small or large stature Excluding events to compress time, fast or slow pacing of action
Postfilmic Conventions	Examples
Audio	Music, sound effects, silent, or dialogue (e.g. diction, volume, pitch, pacing, modulation, emotional inflections)
Transitions	Words on static background, fade, dissolve, wipe
Screen writing	Title page, credits, and subtitles
Editing	Storing or converting files, deleting segments, rearranging frames, combining sound and image, kineikonic composition
Timing	Sequence and duration of images and audio elements
Distribution	Presenting the film to others

Table 1.0 Metalanguage for Movie Design

The kineikonic mode differs in particular ways to the semiotic codes and conventions of still images, upon which existing multimodal grammars for teachers and students have tended to focus. The moving image is an integrated orchestration of modes consisting of moving images and sound, also known as vertical montage, and the combined practices of filming and editing to frame the representation and to assemble it in a series of juxtapositions (Burn & Parker, 2003). While there are many elements that apply to both still and moving images, the following features are unique to kineikonic design.

1. Technical Codes – How the text is constructed, from the shooting of the scenes to the final editing of the film (e.g. camera angles, framing, lighting, creation of time, transitions, editing).
2. Screen Codes – How the images are constructed for filming (e.g. three-dimensional setting and props, background scenes, clothing, appearance and gestures of plasticine-on-wood figures).
3. Spatiotemporal Elements – How the movements of people and objects are depicted (e.g. speed, continuity, flow, and direction).
4. Kineikonic Composition – How the moving images are orchestrated with other modes to convey meaning (e.g. relative salience of each mode) (Anstey & Bull, 2004; van Leeuwen, 1996).

I use the categories of kineikonic design from Table 1.0 as a framework for the multimodal analysis of a movie entitled “The Case of the Disappearing Pimples”. The creators of the movie were students of a low-literacy ability stream, and their ethnic backgrounds included Anglo-Australian, Maori, and Tongan.

Pre-filmic Elements

Genre and Message

The Case of the Disappearing Pimples is a narrative, animated, educational film, depicting the unfolding of actions governed by time in a spatial and temporal sequence. The plot of the narrative film was summarised by the teacher:

This movie is about girls who are at a party. The next day they are at the shopping centre and one of the girls has developed lots of pimples. So they have decided to buy fresh fruit and vegetables, and Clearasil. Two weeks later, they are having a healthy party with lots of sandwiches. The girls are talking about how her pimples have cleared up.

The movie was divided into three main scenes with two inserts or frames within the scenes – close-ups – bounded by transitions, and concluded with a maxim to restate the message explicitly.

Scene 1	Party – eating unhealthy food
Insert	Close-up: pimples appear
Scene 2	Shopping – buying healthy food
Scene 3	Indoors – Eating healthy food
Insert	Close-up: pimples disappear
Maxim	“Don’t eat too much junk food”.

Table 2.0 Structure of The Case of the Disappearing Pimples

The movie followed the conventional structure of narrative film, including a central problem (pimples from junk food), solution (healthy food and skin products), climax (pimples disappear and friends notice), and coda (“Don’t eat too much junk food!”). The total running time was forty-five seconds, even though the fictional events depicted took place over a much longer duration. The audience of the movie was the parents and siblings of the year six students, for whom they were required to communicate an educational message. The message of the text was communicated implicitly in the plot and explicitly in the final voice-over and complementary linguistic text: “Don’t eat too much junk food”.

The movie employed intertextuality and hybridity by making connections to a “reality television” program:

Tenneile: We’re like, the “Fab Five!”

Shani: “Queer Eye.”

The “Fab Five” is a reference to the actors in a TV series called “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy” in which five gay men do makeovers to improve the grooming of heterosexual men. The girls transferred the theme of “image” from the context of popular media culture and its stereotypes, to the context of their own pre-teen life worlds. In this way, a cross-cultural aspect of meaning making was evident in this transformation.

The hybrid, multimodal text was characterised by a significant degree of transformed meanings and originality, and drew upon the learners’ existing semiotic or cultural resources. The pedagogic outcome was more than an exact replication or precise reproduction. The movie design had required taking knowledge and capabilities from one setting, and adapting them to results in imaginative originality and generative hybridity as masters of the convention of movie-making (Kalantzis & Cope, 2005).

Storyboard

The beginning of the movie-making process is the process of storyboarding, in which a sequence of words and still images are employed as notations for the moving image to be materialised. Although movement and time are essential to the kineikonic design, during storyboarding they remain abstract in the minds of the designers (Burn & Parker, 2003). This requires imagining how the moving image will appear, including the framing of each shot (eg, *long shots*, *close-up*, *high*, *low*, or *intermediate angles*).

The teacher introduced the metalanguage for storyboard design including “*characters*”, “*scenes*”, and “*events*” in the movie narrative, and “*roles*” in production (eg, photographer, movement of characters). The writing of the script involved cutting up the *dialogue* or *voice-over* into segments to match each visual *frame* or *shot*. Alternatively, background *music* and *sound effects* could have been used for movies in which the image sequence conveys the intended message effectively. The following transcript shows the girls’ initial brainstorming during storyboarding:

Shani: What are we going to do!
Roxie: I think we should do healthy food.
Tenneile: No!
Shani: Just write it down [Hands blank storyboard frames to Tenneile]
Mel: School rules?
Roxie: I don’t like school rules. I reckon we could have healthy food and milk.
Shani: Write it down – healthy food – whatever. Here...merely suggestions.
[Takes paper from Tenneile who is not writing, and records the group’s first idea] I think ours should be a person... [begins to draw first frame of storyboard]
Mel: Yes – trying makeup, or something!
Roxie: Don’t always talk about make-up – it’s too girly!
Shani: Why don’t we do it about, like a person, and he wants to choose what to eat. And he wants to be healthy – like that [starts drawing]. Like he has to choose from a pizza...
Roxie: Oh, that’s good!
Shani Or, what was it again, that’s right, a sandwich. Sand...wich [says slowly, as she writes] and he like, has to get all the materials out and he has to choose....
Tenneile: What about someone who gets lots of pimples from eating unhealthy food.
Roxie: That’s disgusting! [The girl’s faces how disgust]
Girls: [Laughter]
Shani: Why don’t we list a few rude ideas.
Mel: Why don’t we just get some dots [gesturing drawing dots with pencil]
Tenneile: No – use Play doh! Cool!

The outcome of this pre-filmic process of design was a series of two-dimensional drawings, resembling a cartoon, showing four scenes – party, shops, school, and eating healthy food. The preliminary script was later modified to match the duration of each scene more precisely, and the school scene was omitted due to time limitations. A key feature of the storyboard was the exclusive use of long shots, since

the convention of close-up to indicate social proximity with the viewer had not been explicitly taught. Similarly, the affordances and technique of low-angle drawings to create powerful figures requires instruction (Burn & Parker, 2003).

Setting and props

An important diegetic - that is, existing within the content of the narrative film - aspect of filming is the material design of the movie model - base, backdrop, and props. The Case of the Disappearing Pimples utilised different material affordances of claymation stage and prop design, combining natural and manufactured materials, such as fabric and carpet remnants, recycled materials, plasticine, and craft supplies. Through the materiality of the props and figures, such as their weight, size, shape, texture, and form, they became embodiments of the ideas and images in the children's minds (Stein, 2006).

The girls constructed two sets for their movie, while additional scenes were created through the affordances of close-up shots. The girls created a third scene by redecorating the first set, removing items, and adding carpet and a tablecloth laden with plates of healthy food.

In the first set, an upholstered sofa in purple silk was the most visually salient object, upon which the claymation figures would be positioned. The colour of the sofa contrasted the bold vertical blue and red stripes of the wallpaper. High colour differentiation and saturation is a semiotic resource indicating expressions of energy and excitement. The set showed attention to naturalistic detail through the inclusion of well-proportioned decorative props such as wall hangings, balloons, a side table, and crimson contrast cushions.

The second movie set, representing the interior of a supermarket, lacked visual depth and interest, being a two-dimensional white background. Rather, the movie stage needed to be a three-dimensional space that afforded temporal sequences of the movement of figures across the space of the model. The drawings of shop signs, with uneven handwriting, would have afforded greater depth if suspended at varying distances from the camera. Similarly, instead of drawing side-profiles of shelves on the backdrop, they could have used three-dimensional boxes filled with plasticine food items. The girls needed explicit teaching to realise the full affordances of three-dimensional design, such as material, form, depth, gravity, shadows, mass, weight, stability, texture, and modularity. The shift from two-dimensional storyboard design to three-dimensional set and prop construction has different demands for communicating visually, spatially, and gesturally. The girls needed to transfer meanings from images on a single plane, with boundaries of height and width, to the open multi-dimensionality of time and space.

Characters

The characters in the story were reconstructions of the students' identities, so that each member contributed elements of their personal history and culture to the design (Kress, 2000b).

Roxie: Or do you want a girl eating lots of chocolate and getting pimples?

Shani: And then she starts eating healthy food...and the pimples start to go away.

Roxie: Mel can be the girl with the pimples.

Tenneile: Yeah, because she's not here [cannot reject the role]

Shani: No, 'cause she's the boy.

The girls saw the characters as representations of themselves, which resulted in an all-female cast of characters. The plasticine costumes of the four plasticine-on-wood figures demonstrated attention to stylistic detail, drawing from multiple cultural contexts in their multilayered lifeworlds. There were resemblances between the girls' physical markers of identity and those of the figures, such as their skin tones, short skirts, and long hair. These were blended with iconic features of females that dominate Western media, such as blonde hair and slim figures. The eventual characters were a syncretic mix of the girls' identity markers and contemporary Western ideals (Stein & Slonimsky, 2006). This cultural production of virtualities made space for the emergence of an imagined, refigured world (Pahl, 2001). The movie creation was an intertextual universe connecting TV programs and media consumption to their preteen culture (Luke). For example, the girls' dialogue showed consciousness of media constructions of femininity:

[Mel is using a layer of craft foam wrapped around the body of the wooden character under the clothes].

Researcher: Are you using foam to make it look more realistic?

Mel: To make it fat. This is going to be Jessica.

Researcher: Oh?

Mel: ahum

Shani: Yep!

Mel: [Reaches over to get a large handful of pillow stuffing and laughs]

Shani: She's going to kill you, you know!

The girls "constructed" themselves in the image of current media idols. The central theme of their movie hinged on the problem of maintaining a flawless complexion. This echoes the dominant messages in the media that market females as embodiments of ageless beauty, rather than as holistic individuals possessing personal, intellectual, spiritual, social, physical, or political power. Pre-teen females are seen agonising over their appearance and are admired by their peers when they improve their image. The process of filmmaking mediated their stereotypical understanding of females and image, restructuring their experience, knowledge, and social relations.

Filmic Elements

Filming Location and lighting

In claymation moviemaking, capturing a successful sequence of shots within a scene requires a constant camera angle and lighting. This creates the appearance of continuous movement of the figures against a static background. When the separate shots are spliced together and digitally assembled on the screen, there should be no discrepancies between the colour rendition or lighting between each shot (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The teacher established the back right-hand corner of the classroom as the filming studio. The focus of the makeshift studio corner was a desk on which to place the miniature set and props. The model was illuminated by the natural lighting that entered from the windows along the right side of the room, while two lamps were carefully positioned on either side of the desk, facing inward. Directly in front of the model, a tripod supported a digital camera angled slightly downwards toward the multimodal display:

Teacher: Your floor area will be here. I've got these little signs saying "Filming in Progress" and "Quiet Please" there...because this area will

be completely out of bounds when filming is happening. I've got a lamp that is going to be turned on here [points to the lamps] Why? Why do you think I've got a lamp that is going to be turned on here? Rhonda?ⁱ

Rhonda: For the light

Teacher: What about the light?

Rhonda: So you can see?

Teacher: What do you notice about this light when I'm moving?

Brianna: There's shadows

David: Shadows

Teacher: There are shadows. Where are the shadows coming from?

Julia: The light through the windows

Teacher: The light coming through the window is very bright. So to balance that, we need light coming from this direction, because we really don't need your shadows in the movie. So if we had two lamps that are shining this way, then it will give some of your characters depth and dimension. Ok? Lighting is very important.

The spatial boundaries of the filming area were reinforced by obsolete space around its perimeter. This palpable disconnection between the filming zone and other spatial areas of the classroom was necessary to stabilise the variables in the environment. For each scene, the girls were required to modify the filming area to include different sets and props, including resetting the lighting conditions:

[Mel puts one lamp on the set and Shani sets up the other to balance the light from the window].

Researcher: Did you have that board at the side blocking the light from the window?

Shani: Yeah, we had that before.

Throughout the filming of each scene, the girls consciously maintained constant lighting and minimised the shadows from their bodies, resulting in a consistent colour rendition in the final film on screen.

Zoom and Point of View

There are certain technical codes in the kineikonic mode that influence the creation of interpersonal meanings, including camera angles or viewing positions that are encoded in an image. It is important to note that when taking long shots of claymation movies, the tripod and digital camera must be horizontally and vertically aligned with the movie set to be photographed. The photographer must ensure that neither the top nor bottom edges of the model are visible in the digital photographs, nor essential details missed in the effort to film inside the perimeter of the model. This visual framing leads the viewer to assume that the depicted scene extends beyond the perimeters of the screen.

The girls created certain relationships between the viewers and the world depicted in their claymation movie. The three main scenes of the movie – party, shop, and eating healthy food – were taken using high-angle shots, which look down on the action to indicate an objective *point of view*. This created low interpersonal engagement between the four, equally salient characters and the viewer. Contrastingly, inserts were created using close-up camera angles (*zoom*) in the first and last scenes to signify high personal engagement and subjectivity. The main character gazes at the viewers on an equal plane to establish an interpersonal level of engagement (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). This works effectively with the dialogue

in which the character shares her critical self-reflections: “*Oh, I’ve eaten too much fatty food.*”

Pointers and Framing

A hallmark of movie plots is the presence of vectors, which can be simply termed “*pointers*”. Vectors or pointers function like arrows, formed by bodies, extended limbs, or objects, to show the direction of action in a scene (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). *Actors* are the participants from whom the vector extends. The object to which the vector is aimed is called the *goal*. Together, the actor and goal engage in an *event*. A variety of *event structures* were utilised in the movie. For example, in the first scene of the movie, the actors form vectors with their bodies when they participate in the “Conga line” choreography. Each character uses their arms and bodies to point to the next person in the line, who became the next goal of the action. Each character, in turn, joins the Conga Line, forming a *chain of events*. A different form of action was seen in the inserts. The close-up of two characters’ faces showed a *two-way event*. Like a two-headed arrow, the two characters were both speakers and listeners in a conversation, and the action occurred simultaneously (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

While younger students may not benefit from detailed taxonomies of event structures, it is helpful for students to be aware of the role of pointers when creating moving images. For example, in the third scene of the shopping centre, the girls depicted signs suspended from the roof. These functioned as pointers to lead the viewer’s eye to the action on the shop floor below.

Another useful concept for students to understand visual composition is *framing* (or its absence), through devices which connect or disconnect elements. For example, in the party scene, a square of carpet spatially framed the action in front of the sofa, where the main action occurs. Similarly, in the shop scene, the red floor met the white wall forming a horizontal midline across the screen. This created a spatial boundary or zone to frame the sequence of events in the foreground.

Movement and Animations

When designing the spatial and temporal axis of a film, stop-motion animation techniques must be utilised effectively. The characters are shot one frame at a time and repositioned slightly between each frame, giving the illusion of lifelike motion. A central skill is envisaging how the accumulation of still frames, and the constant repositioning of figures and objects in each frame, will result in various qualities of movement on the screen. These include flow, continuity, pace, and spatial direction (Burn & Parker, 2003). These visual effects are accomplished in-camera and during filming, rather than during editing.

Though the girls were not fully cognisant of the technical codes for creating movement, they were able to create smooth and deliberate spatial trajectories of the characters. To achieve this effect the girls took two hundred photos, repositioning the characters subtly over four hours while maintaining a static background. The overall effect was a realistic sequence of continuous, life-like movement with a clear storyline.

The movements of the characters combined *frontal* and *oblique* angles to the camera and to other characters. The use of oblique angles signals a degree of *detachment* from the viewers, while the use of frontal angles creates stronger *engagement* with the viewers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The use of the *back view* was necessitated by the choreography of the “Conga line”, in which multiple planes,

angles, and degrees of involvement with the viewer are assumed by the group at any given point in time. The *gaze* of the characters was at *eye level* to one another, making the group symbolically *equal*, and this was reinforced by the physical proximity of the group members to one another (Jewitt, 2006).

Screen Layout and Character Relations

The spatiotemporal elements of screen layout and character relations - that is, how the movement of people and objects are depicted to show interactive meanings - are significant here. For example, in the establishing scene, there is multidirectional action created by the four characters. Two characters are seated on the left and right of the sofa, while two stand in the *foreground* on the left and right, creating symmetry in the visual composition. The characters predominantly dance in the centre of the room in front of the sofa, gaining *visual salience* by moving within the foreground and centre of the screen. The most important feature of the dance scene is the variety of movements across all zones of the screen, creating interest for the viewer.

In the second scene (shop), the characters enter the bottom right side of the screen and move linearly to the left. This *right-left directionality* contrasts what Kress and van Leeuwen describe as the meaning potential of left-right in Western alphabetic cultures. They have observed that Western textual practice predominantly signifies movement from the *given* or *known* (left) to the *new* or *unknown* (right) in two-dimensional representation, and possibly, in the third dimension (Kress, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996).

The movement of the characters from the right to left zones of the screen parallels the movement of grocery shoppers in Western culture. The architectonic meanings of shop floor layout, such as the location of the turnstile at the store entrance, channels customers to move linearly from right to left, or *vice-versa*. This highlights the way in which the established patterns of informational value associated with left-right directionality of print are not uniformly transferred to moving images on the screen. Rather, directionality of moving images are influenced by the particular cultural practices represented on the screen (eg, shopping, driving), while highlighting how these conventions are frequently blurred in the dynamic shifting of discursive practices of a digital era (Fairclough, 2000).

The most significant spatial relation among the participants was the appearance of a fifth character during the third scene (eating healthy food), which was borrowed from another group to be a visitor. This character was designed by a Sudanese girl who arrived in Australia as a refugee. There are striking resemblances between her physical markers of identity and those of the figure, such as an African skin tone, dark braided hair, and prominent lips. Yet these were blended innovatively and transformatively with her identity in a Western sociocultural context, marked by Western clothing and accessories. The fifth figure straddled “the local and the global, the past and the present” (Stein, 2006).

Unlike the four main characters, the fifth figure was defined by the absence of life and movement. While the other characters were constantly animated – changing postures, eating, and moving in solidarity with the group – the fifth figure was relegated to the sofa, where she remained idle, visually and spatially marginalised as “other”. Several times during the making of the film, the researcher drew attention to this absence of movement:

Researcher: Make sure the one on the couch moves a bit.

[Later]

Researcher: Is the purple one going to get some food?

Shani: Na – it's not hungry.

The four figures were consistently repositioned to show a range of interactions between members of the clique, often turned with their gaze toward one another. The girls employed the affordances of frontal and oblique angles to show varying degrees of engagement between the characters and the viewers. In contrast, the fifth character was moved to the table only when the other characters had finished eating and were reclining on the sofa. The gaze of the fifth figure was turned away from the other characters and the camera. She was the only character photographed from back view, which is used to indicate the strongest degree of detachment. Wittingly or unwittingly, consciously or uncritically, the girls drew upon visual, spatial and kineikonic resources to distance the non-member from the clique.

Power Relations

Power relations can be created through a variety of kineikonic techniques. For example, using the camera to “pan” up objects generates the power of subject. High angles diminish the power of the representation, while low angles create the opposite effect. Darkening a scene, elongating shadows, or creating larger figures engenders power. Similarly, dressing figures in certain colours (eg, black for power, pastels for softness) can signify different degrees of power.

For example, the final scene is a photo of the four girls who created the movie. Taken from a frontal angle and at eye-level with the participants, the image projects a relation of equality between the filmmakers and the viewers. Furthermore, the frontal, directed gaze at viewers creates a sense of the participants' maximum involvement. *Demand images* symbolically command attention from the viewer, as opposed to an offer or invitation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). The duration of the photo on the screen is stable, creating a steady and powerful gaze to engage with the viewers, rather than a fluctuating or hesitant one. The girls are positioned equally in a two-by-two array in the centre of the symmetrical composition.

Post-Filmic Elements

Audio

The movie sound consisted predominantly of dialogue, with a short music segment to create a party mood in the establishing scene. The upbeat music complemented the moving images by establishing a celebratory mood. It performed the specialised task of maintaining the flow and rhythm of the movie against the conjunctions of scene transitions in the visual montage or assembly of shots.

Scene 1- Party	“ <i>Let's party and dance!</i> ” [Jazz piano music]
Insert – Close up	“ <i>Oh, I've eaten too much fatty food.</i> ”
Scene 2- Shops	1. “ <i>I'm getting pimples from eating too much junk food.</i> ” 2. “ <i>Let's buy some healthy food.</i> ” 3. “ <i>How about some fruit?</i> ” 4. “ <i>Look, some Clearasil</i> ” 5. “ <i>This should get rid of my pimples.</i> ”
Scene 3- Eating Healthy Food	“ <i>Guess what? My pimples have gone!</i> ” “ <i>Yeah, you look pretty.</i> ”

	<i>"Thanks."</i>
Scene 3- Close-up	<i>"Yum, this healthy food is delicious."</i>
Coda – Movie-makers holding signs to reinforce movie message	<i>"Don't eat too much junk food!"</i>

Table 2.0 Audio: Dialogue for the Case of the Disappearing Pimples

The decision to use dialogue was effective in the movie, since the storyline and message of the text could not be communicated through images alone. The girls initially composed and rehearsed their script with the drama teacher, giving attention to elements such as diction, volume, pitch, rhythm, modulation, and emotional inflections. The teacher then worked with the girls to record their speech using a computer microphone in short syntagmatic clusters or "digital sound bites", equivalent to short segments of the action in the movie (Burn & Parker, 2003). The teacher was positioned as the expert in relation to the mediating tools or technology. She utilised the provisional nature of digital recording to save, replay, pause, delete, or splice the sound bites indefinitely. The media software package offered the teacher iconic resources such as toolbars, drop-down menus, icons and hyperlinks, which mediated the permanent storage of the ephemeral text (speech) as a digital resource for the next stage of production – combining the visual and audio elements (Burn & Parker, 2003).

Transitions and Time

In the diachronic axis of a visual track, the most salient conjunctions are those between scenes, called *transitions*. In sequences of moving images, time is signified implicitly by boundaries – an abrupt cut of one moment in time - and conjunction, the juxtaposition of another moment in time. Every transition "signifies a temporal shift" of some kind to create an overall effect of rapid sequence in which time is partitioned, absent, omitted, or condensed (Burn & Parker, 2003).

Between certain scenes in *The Case of the Disappearing Pimples* static transitions were used to show the relations between successive scenes. For example, after the first scene, the static words "The Next day" condenses time, signalling an explicit temporal shift that could not be inferred from the images or dialogue. Similarly, the words "Two weeks later" effectively signals the passage of time between the shopping event and the return to the lounge room, which was necessary to explain the cause-and-effect disappearance of the pimples. These transitions expertly functioned as a timing device, fast-forwarding the plot to the most important events in the narrative. It indicated a change in both spatial and temporal meaning – there is a new location and a gap in time. The movie concluded with the movie credits superimposed over the final claymation shot.

Screen writing

The movie began with a static, purple title screen in which the visual and spatial design of the written words – "The Case of the Disappearing Pimples" – and the names of the girls were prominent. An elegant and embellished Old English font resembling calligraphy was chosen, and the written text was centred on the screen.

The first transition between the party and the shopping scene was a static slide with the bold words in Times New Roman font, "The next day". The words were saliently framed by a scalloped white bubble, which was contrasted against a red background. The second transition, which occurred between the shopping and the healthy food scenes, signalled that the events occurred "Two weeks later". Again, the

words were prominently positioned in a white text bubble, this time against a light blue background. After the final close-up, the words appear “The pimples were never seen again”. The colour and style of the static background and font were the same as the title scene, creating continuity. The maxim or motto “Don’t eat too much junk food!” was presented one-word-per-photo using bold black font on a lively yellow background, the sentence appearing as a whole in the final shot.

This draws attention to the way in which *screen writing* is clearly more than monomodal, one mode, but is itself a multimodal orchestration of linguistic, visual, and spatial modes (Jewitt & Kress, 2003). Unlike the words in print-based literature, the linguistic elements on the screen are reconfigured with strong spatial and visual elements, such as font style, colour, size, contrast, directionality, and positioning.

Editing

Finally, in the process of *editing*, the syntagmatic groupings of image, sound, and words were combined digitally and synchronised (Burn & Parker, 2003). This stage of production was conducted in the classroom, where a technology area, consisting of two personal computers and a printer, was permanently positioned. The digital hardware and animation software were important cultural resources for meaning making, expertly navigated by the teacher. In the girls’ movie, both the moving image and dialogue were essential modes in the creation of meaning, carrying a significant and complementary *functional load* (Jewitt, 2006). The teacher used digital editing software – a configuration of tools and semiotic resources – to show the girls how to upload, convert, import, combine, and edit the digital image and audio files (*voice-over* and *music*). She also guided them to add a *title page*, *transitions*, and *credits*. The teacher made executive decisions about the diachronic axis of the movie, such as programming the duration of each frame, while scaffolding the students’ semiotic choices about the visual, spatial, and linguistic elements of the design. This knowledge was transferred from the students’ prior experiences with word processing and still images.

Distribution

The *distribution* of the movie involved transmitting the text to a real audience. This often involves re-encoding (recording) the text to suit different technologies and formats of transmission (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). The claymation movie was presented to the intended school community audience at an awards night. The teacher projected the movies onto a large screen using a data projector and computer hard drive. Displaying the movies on a high vertical plane symbolised the “ideal”. Each group strode down the red carpet, symbolising celebrity status, to receive awards for the design strengths of their movie.

A relevant issue here concerns how cultural factors influenced the selection of modes for distribution to the intended audience (Jewitt, 2006). The use of the kineikonic mode, particularly animation, is consistent with the cultural value placed upon images over written words for family audiences, and the increasingly powerful role of kineikonics in the globalised world of entertainment (Burn & Parker, 2003; Jewitt & Kress, 2003).

Conclusion

An aim of this paper was to synthesise a multimodal grammar for the description of work in the kineikonic mode that can be adapted by teachers in classrooms. Representing a shift from the monomodal pedagogies of the past, multimodal designing is becoming a conscious design process that is taught explicitly to foster new ways of representing learning

Designing a claymation film is a collaborative and creative venture that draws upon a range of affordances, tools, and semiotic resources to orchestrate meaning across modes. A significant measure of transformation is required, rather than an exact replication or precise reproduction of an existing design. The students revoice the world in a way that has never occurred before, expressing effectiveness in communicating cultural meaning through a unique combination of multiple modes of meaning (e.g. linguistic, moving visual, audio, spatial, gestural, and digital) (Kalantzis & Cope, 2000).

The kineikonic mode is a significant aspect of the metalanguage developed here, since it differs in many ways to the metalanguages of linguistics and still images. On the one hand, some elements of kineikonic work are familiar to teachers and consciously taught in classrooms. For example, the teacher of the grade six girls taught the students a metalanguage for narrative conventions, sentence structure, vocabulary, and for visual and spatial design of screen writing. Conversely, the novel aspects of kineikonic design were less conscious to the teacher and students, such as the repositioning of the characters to create movement, the creation of time, and relations between the text and the viewer established through camera angles. The issue with these features of the kineikonic mode, which have been made visible in this paper, is to ensure that they are taught explicitly and drawn more consciously into the design process.

The semiotic terrain is undeniably changing in fundamental ways, and this transformation requires the continued revision of metalanguages or new grammars to describe the burgeoning and hybridised variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies (New London Group, 1996). To continue to teach to a narrow band of print-based genres, grammars, and skills is to ignore the reality of textual practices outside of schools. Students must be free to engage in new and multimodal textual practices, rather than simply reproduce a tightly confined set of linguistic conventions. It is time for teachers and students to embrace a powerful meaning-making resource now accessible in schools – moving images.

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ⁱ All names in this paper are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants.